

SOME ASPECTS OF THE SEAFARERS' LANGUAGE COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The maritime English language knowledge, understanding and proficiency of the University graduates (deck/ engine officers) is the issue of the utmost importance for the Foreign Languages Department. One of the most complicated tasks for the department is the necessity to simultaneously work with the cadets of different basic knowledge of English (cadets of the same group): some of them are the graduates of high schools specializing in languages, but the others - are from some distant villages where they didn't study language at all. The STCW convention specifies the minimum standards of competence for deck/ engine officers regardless of the above fact. The instructors have to be very inventive trying to make odds even.

A new approach to the teaching language for special purposes has been developed using both traditional and intensive methods of language teaching. One of the best ideas (in our opinion) happened to be the re-arranging of the curriculum hours. A five-year period of learning English, i.e. some years only 2 academic hours per week, has been replaced by the so called "cycles". The total quantity of the academic hours allocated for the language has been re-arranged into the said cycles. The duration of each cycle is four to five weeks (depending on year of studies) which means absolute concentration of the cadets on one subject - ENGLISH. Each cycle includes at least two language aspects: English for special purposes (deck/ engine officers) and everyday English. The required grammar material is used as a foundation both for the maritime and spoken English syllabi. Another thing which made for the success of the whole undertaking was the implementation of the rhythmopedia. The latter is a method of the intensive presentation of foreign language information against a background of rhythm stimulation, its retention in memory by means of technical aids and its actualization during the group - communication in class. The method serves as contributory factor for the active assimilation of a considerable amount of information and the development of imaginative abilities in a student. The whole process of the teaching has been re-considered: including the class-rooms, used materials and text-books, given tasks and played roles. The cadets are supposed to play their part in one and rather long-lasting play named "A daily routine of a deck/ engine officer in charge of a watch". Even the special course "Tune into Maritime English" has been developed, singing songs "Taking a pilot on board" or "Clearing the Ship Inward", etc. the cadets can practice and learn how to properly pronounce the words and improve their knowledge of the standards phrases for communication at sea. A set of computer tests based on the studied materials, home-reading of the IMO Resolutions, other conventional documents, pilot book, COLREGS, etc. help to keep the desired level of the cadets' motivation and verify their knowledge and understanding of the various aspects of maritime English. We also believe that the competence of the instructors in the issues dealing with the shipboard routine of the watch officers, their desire for self-education and utilization of the latest technologies in teaching, as well as well-prepared and timely updated materials will keep in line with the required level of the graduates proficiency.

1. Introduction

Since its inception the International Maritime Organization has recognized the importance of human resources to the development of the maritime industry W.A. O Neil

The process of mastering any profession and achieving the required level of competency in it is rather multilateral and time-consuming. The efficiency of a specialist training at the stage of his professional education, the ways of the professionalism achievement have both theoretical and practical importance. There are too many inexpert and incompetent people in various industries whose work have already resulted in huge losses in economy, industry, agriculture, politics. Lack of due professionalism leads to loss of people, ships, natural resources, environment pollution. The issue of improving the professional training of seafarers to ensure the world fleet accident-free operation is and has been the topic of discussions of the IMO Sessions, industry associations conferences and meeting. The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) has adopted the detailed list of the requirements a navigator should meet depending on his rank and the ship's type.

A navigator (both Master mariner and his mates) represents the whole State; the progress of the international contacts, safety of the ship and her crew operations depend upon the degree of his English language (as an official Maritime language) proficiency, knowledge, skills, capabilities and his communicative culture. Consequently the professional competency of a navigator- watchkeeper is inconceivable without knowledge of

Maritime English at the level of a very competent user. The language competence of a navigator should meet very strict international standards specified by the STCW 78/95.

World processes generate the social order directed to the system of the professional education in general and methods of the professional communication pedagogy in particular. The pedagogical objectives directly follow from the social goals and social point of education. The increased social requirements to the development and the educational level of an individual, new conditions of life, the latest achievements in science and technology change both the methods of teaching and the pedagogical practices content. The development of new teaching methods, review of the already existing ones with the account of the actual educational objectives alterations is a social task equally with the pedagogical one. The issue of the qualitative improvement of the professional education is closely linked with the development of more sophisticated, scientifically substantiated methods of the educational-cognitive activity control, making the creative abilities more active. With the increase of the scientific information, more and more complicated system of knowledge, skills, experiences and abilities should be put into the students consciousness within the shorter period of time. The latter task require to activate some internal reserves. Introduction of modern technologies into the process of teaching is also the integral part of the updated educational reality making for a success of the professional education.

2. Language Competence

The dictionary defines *competence* as a A specific range of skill, knowledge, or ability. More specific definition of the term is given in the Guidance on the Implementation of IMO Model Courses: The term competence should be understood as the application of knowledge, understanding, proficiency, skills, experience for an individual to perform a task, duty or responsibility on board in a safe, efficient and timely manner.

The competence is always connected with the definite field of activity. We are basically interested in the knowledge and abilities of a mariner in foreign language. The language competence of a seafarer (master-mariner and watchkeeper) includes the whole complex of his knowledge, lingual skills and abilities acquired in the course of education and training and aimed at the solution of various professional tasks. The STCW Code includes the English language knowledge, understanding and proficiency into one of the basic functions of an officer in charge of a navigational watch *Navigation at the operational level*. The Code requires Adequate knowledge of the English language to enable the officer to use charts and other nautical publications, to understand meteorological information and messages concerning ship's safety and operation, to communicate with other ships and coast stations and to perform the officer's duties also with a multilingual crew, including the ability to use and understand the Standard Marine Navigational Vocabulary as replaced by the IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases.

The language competence also includes the awareness in the following: a) professional field— i.e. in the field where one tries to gain real success and become an expert; b) linguistic field- i.e. in the units, structures and systems of the foreign language required to study any language in general; c) social-psychological field- i.e. in the field of communication processes. The language competence n equally with other personal peculiarities cannot be considered the final feature of an individual. The best indication of the language competence presence is that the University graduate by the beginning of his seafaring career has already obtained the whole conglomeration of the required abilities, skills and knowledge. The availability of the above mentioned items will allow the graduate to effectively solve various professional problems including the communicative ones as well. The main criterion of the seafarers language proficiency level assessment is his ability in the course of the professional career to make the relationships in the best possible manner stimulating confidential and trustworthy attitude to himself, the ship and the crew. Accident-free ships operation, especially with the multinational crews sometimes totally depends on the language competence of her officers (primarily navigators). On account of the above mentioned, the problem of the seafarers language competence development gains a special importance. The improvement of the existing system of the professional language training in view of the said could be done by

- Re-distribution of the subjects studied at the early stages of the professional education;
- Transferring the language- for- the- professional- purposes studies to later stages;
- Re-considering the methods and techniques used in teaching the foreign language for professional purposes;
- Using the latest scientific and technical achievements in the classroom.

2.1 Some Difficulties in Teaching Foreign Language for Professional Purposes

The increased demand for a sound and competent knowledge of a foreign language is a feature of our days. However the situation in the language-teaching industry, as we may call it, is rather diversified¹. On the one hand, methods for teaching languages are getting more and more sophisticated, highly technological and- what is

¹ The author means the situation with language teaching in Russia

rather important- costly. On the other hand, the providers of language training services (in our case- the departments of foreign languages) are experiencing financial problems like the whole educational system in the country. Only some instructors have an access to computer-based technologies, the Internet and Web sites. This is without mentioning the insufficient quantity of academic hours provided by the curriculum for foreign language studies.

The existing system of teaching foreign languages for special purposes at the Technical Universities has some specific features which make the whole process of language teaching and studies rather complicated and difficult. For example, sometimes we have to teach the junior students the foreign language for special purposes. It means that the students having rather vague idea of their profession have to study the foreign language for professional purposes. The curriculum for the students of some specialization includes a two-year course of professional foreign language: the first and the second ones. So we have to teach a first-year student of the Refrigeration Department the ways of repairing, let's say, of an evaporator or some other machinery in English (!) The results of such work are well-known: the best students can learn the required terminology and, hopefully, they will be able to understand some original specifications or other written materials. Their ability to use the foreign language in professional communication leaves much to be desired. The developed approach and the very situation in language teaching had to be changed if we were going to train a professional meeting the international standards and requirements. One of the most important steps on the way to improve the existing system of language teaching was to re-arrange the curriculum hours allocated for the English language studies². Traditionally the cadets of the Maritime Faculties of the higher educational establishments in Russia study Maritime English during the whole period of his/her studies at the University. It means a great quantity of academic hours dragged out for a five-year period of studies. In practice the distribution of hours within a semester could bring up to two, four or sometimes even six academic³ hours per week. The first and the second year cadets had weekly two or three pairs of English, but the fifth-year cadets had a chance to study English once a week. It was rather difficult to explain the specific features of the ships daily routine for a first year cadet and absolutely impossible to insert the required minimum into the two-hours class of English for a fifth-year cadets. That system proved to be ineffective.

Another problem for the department is the necessity to simultaneously work with the cadets of different basic knowledge of English (cadets of the same group): some of them are the graduates of high schools specializing in languages, but the others - are from some distant villages where they didn't study language at all. The STCW convention specifies the minimum standards of competence for deck/ engine officers regardless of the above fact. The instructors have to be very inventive trying to make odds even.

Low motivation in learning foreign language is also the issue of concern of the language teachers, especially in case with the training specialists for fishery fleet. The fact that their relatives or whoever been a crewmember of some coastal ship and have never been abroad can dominate in their mind. Their shortsightedness could hardly be overcome. The psychologists underline that the initial period of a junior student/ cadet studies at the University includes a number of aspects, such as: psychologically-pedagogical; socially-psychological; personally-motivational; etc. Some zones of difficulties the student/ cadet meet during his studies are behind the mentioned aspects. One of the most important among them is the personally-motivational aspect linked with the formation of the positive motives in studies as well as the individual features of a future professional, real expert in his field/ industry. This aspect could be considered as the uniting one; it implies as the required conditions both the psychologically-pedagogical and socially-psychological as well as a number of others.

2.2 Background

Research of the psychologically-pedagogical problems of the professional education stage has been carried out in the country for a long time. The development of some specific methods of teaching, implementation of new means and techniques of presenting the materials, enrichment of the types and forms of classes — the result of the laborious work of many language educational theorists and researchers. The necessity to lean for support on the data of linguistics and psychology in teaching foreign languages (both specific and general) is a well-known postulate. The practical expediency of some lingual-psychological concept in connection with the specific conditions, aims and objectives of teaching makes for the generation of the principles to form a desired course or method. The social demand in practical command of foreign language marked the changes in language learning from the system of language as a whole to developing the speech actions, speech skills and speech behavior. The appearance of new methods of teaching aimed at practical results was determined by the new psychological and linguistic theories. The task of developing the communicative competence has been done by the representatives

² The mentioned changes have been implemented for some faculties and departments of the University. Though the Navigation Department of the Maritime Faculty pioneered the above. Therefore the author summarizes the results of a ten-year-experience of new approach in teaching Maritime English.

³ In Russian Federation one academic hour equals to 45 minutes, but the Universities usually divide the classes into the so called pairs, which mean two hours, i.e. 90 minutes, having a short 5 minute-interval between hours.

of audiolingual and audiovisual method. When considering the principles in the foundation of these methods in teaching foreign languages one can find that the set of such principles disproportionately reflects predominance either of linguistics or psychology. Central to the techniques of audiolingual method was the behaviorist belief that learners could be trained to speak English correctly by listening and then responding to units of language presented in carefully graded sequence. The audiolingual method was characterized by the excessive passion for purely mechanical exercises, lack of speech exercises, underestimation of the native language role and individual features of learners; unjustified gap in teaching oral and written language. Although aspects of audiolingual method have been carried through to the communicative approach, it is now recognized that teaching needs to incorporate a broader and more realistic view of language use and language learning, views which have emerged from research into second language acquisition. The research has exposed the limitations of the audiolingual method, but, it is important to recognize why this method gained currency during 60s/70s. Audiolingual method was a reaction to the traditional practice of foreign language teaching, which was based on techniques for teaching the ancient classic languages of Latin and Greek. The students of these languages were required to read rather than speak, learning was traditionally based on analyzing and memorizing structure for the purposes of translation. The system was known as the grammar translation method. Although it may have worked well for classical scholars, it cannot cater adequately for those who need to be able to speak in foreign languages nowadays. The globally-structural imitation audiovisual method is based on the vocabulary selected from oral speech. But the merit of the method in selecting the vocabulary tends to be a serious disadvantage because of the vagueness of the term *structure*, badly developed hierarchy of structures in various models of courses created by outwardly the same methodology. The audiovisual method is more than the audiolingual one based on psychology. At the same time in spite of the mentioned limitations, the cornerstones of both methods, such as the priority of oral speech, the selection of basic models and speech patterns as well as globally-structural foundation of audiovisual method, had a positive impact on further development of the foreign languages teaching methods and methodology. The situational principle marked the emergency of the communicative approach in language teaching. The communicative approach is characterized, first of all, by the denial of the audiolingual and audiovisual methods ban to use the learners' native language as one of the means of semantization, the grammar explanations are restored in rights. The decisive role belongs to the realization of the learners' demand in own communicative intentions. For seafarers to be able to communicate effectively one needs to be able to use and understand English in a range of situations. Being able to use English means that the seafarer can combine the building blocks of language (grammar, vocabulary, phonology) to express himself clearly and appropriately in speech and writing. Being able to understand English means that the seafarer can interpret messages that he hears and reads correctly and can respond to these messages appropriately and comprehensibly. When a seafarer can demonstrate the ability to do this, he proves his communicative competence in English. The ultimate aim of the communicative approach is that instructors should teach in a way that develops communicative competence. Introducing communication practice helps language learners to become confident in their ability to use English. By actively communicating in English, learners develop their communicative skills, strategies and knowledge of the language itself. Successful communication requires more than the ability to integrate language systems and skills. The learner also needs to understand how social contexts and specific situations influence the choice of language and the type of communication. The underlying principles of the communicative approach are that:

- language is a tool of communication
- teaching should be student-centered
- English should be taught through English
- students learn by active involvement
- learning tasks should reflect real life communication.

The communicative student-centered approach encourages active learning via student involvement. With the instructors' guidance, supervision and encouragement students are encouraged to think about and experiment with language. While instructors can direct and facilitate learning, students themselves have ultimate responsibility for their own progress. Research has shown that people who learn languages successfully have a well developed appreciation of their own learning styles and preferences that enables them to build on their strengths and improve their weaknesses. Instructors can assist students to become aware of their personal learning by encouraging students to reflect upon their own progress on a regular basis. The issues of the language learners' motivation have great importance with this approach. The motivation, interest, desire, psychological comfort, positive emotional relations of the communication partners are the required conditions of a successful language learning. There exist a number of trends in modern psychological and pedagogical theory which define the educational process as mutually mediated activity both of a student and an instructor. The specific problem of modern pedagogical psychology is the problem of a dialogue in teaching or the problem of a pedagogical communication. If the instructor shows that he/ she is actively interested in the students as individuals, the learners will respond well, contributing to a good rapport and a productive learning atmosphere.

The necessity for individuals to be prepared to work with and support each other is one of the terms the learning could take place.

There exist another tendency of changing from the informative to the so called active strategies and methods of teaching including the elements of problem-solving and research; transition to the developing, making more active and game-playing ways of managing the educational process.

Rapid development of the technologies, the surplus of information and overloading of various nature, time deficit is the objective characteristics of the modern period. Under the circumstances the ability to properly use one's own psychological reserves, awareness of the means and ways of psycho-regulation helps to avoid the nervous breakdowns and stresses abound in our life. No wonder some psychologists and psychotherapists⁴ have made an important contribution to pedagogy in general and to the development of the new methods of language teaching.

Another trend in foreign languages teaching is the Intensive method founded on the suggestopedic system. There appeared a number of methodic concepts interpreting the basic ideas of suggestopedia in different manner. They use the information stockpiled by such sciences as communicative linguistics and social-psycholinguistics, psychology of speech activity and psychology of communication, social psychology, pedagogy and methods of foreign languages teaching. The said trend though containing the main features of suggestopedia, differs from it and is considered by many scholars as one of the ways to realize the scientific technical progress tendencies. Based on the principles of personal-communicative and operational approach it is a realistic way to foreign language learning.

2.3 The Updated Approach

To keep in line with modern tendencies in society and maritime community; to comply with the requirements for graduates of technical universities, colleges, academies, etc training professionals for the industry the government supported educational institutions, like the Fisheries University, have to find some ways to optimize language training. The process keeps on going, the search is under way. It brings both positive and negative results. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

The updated approach to the teaching language for special and general purposes has been developed using both traditional and intensive methods of language teaching. Twelve years ago the instructors of the Foreign Languages Department of the Far Eastern State Technical Fisheries University decided to take a chance and try to change the existing state of things. The first step on the way to optimize the foreign language studies was to re-distribute the subjects studied at the early stages of the professional education, as well as hours allocated for language studies. The summarized quantity of the academic hours allotted for the foreign language studies has been divided into three cycles; the term *cycle* is used by the instructors of the Foreign Languages Department to denote the complete periodic course of language teaching.. Since then only a third year cadet-navigator begins to study English. By that time he has already had a sailing practice. Every third-year cadet has to be certified as an able-seaman; he has already got some basic knowledge of the profession. He has already been abroad - the fact which helps to keep the motivation in learning language rather high. It means one thing: a prepared and well-motivated person will begin study foreign language for professional purposes. The updated curriculum includes three cycles of English both for professional and everyday communication. The duration of a cycle differs depending on the year of studies, namely: four weeks for the third and fourth year cadets and five weeks for the fifth year cadets. The second step which helped to better arrange both classroom and individual work of cadets was the implementation of rhythmopedia, a method of intensive presentation of a new material.

The assessment of the language competence level reached by the cadets is done by the experienced language instructors and seafarers. Each cycle comprises the classes of general and specific English. The methodology of the new approach is based on the principles of the communicative approach to language teaching. This approach meets the requirements of STCW in that it promotes practical, communicative competence in English.

2.4 Basic Terminology

It's rather important to clarify the terminology used. Methodological papers and textbooks of the last decades often use the term *intensification*. The term itself is rather broad, so any attempt to reach the final results in a rapid way is considered to be the intensification. However not any intensification is productive. Teaching is productive when every student reaches the desired result at each stage of the training.

An educational activity is a purposeful process responding to the demands for knowledge, skills, abilities and professional education. It results in changes to and enrichment of the learners' inner world. The success of an educational activity is directly dependent on the planning and organization of the process of learning itself. Students' potential abilities are used in a methodically organized, specially planned progression of studies, and this process contains the actual reserves for the intensification of the teaching process.

Thus the achievement of productivity in a student's work under the direction of an instructor, as well as his individual work, might be considered as an intensification of training. Number one: it maximizes possible

⁴ Like G. Lozanov with his method of *Suggestopedia* based on the principles of psychology and the science of *suggestologia*, the latter is a science of the release of a latent reserves of an individual

concentration of time allocated by the curriculum for language studies. Number two: it increases the volume and durability of material comprehension per time unit, taking account of all psychohygienic considerations. An important role is assigned to the technical means, teaching devices used in combination with linguistics, psychology and psycholinguistics.

When solving the problem of optimal teaching conditions, it is extremely important to consider the external factors affecting a learner, his/her individual response to such influences, plus the adequacy of his/her internal psychophysical state to the given external condition.

Intensifying the process of teaching is impossible without considering a number of factors which have a direct impact on it. These factors are as follows: the regularity of memory functioning, knowledge of the most efficient modes of work, the speech articulation processes, the internal laws of expression, the optimal environmental parameters required to create a specific internal state of a student. This means, such intensification is impossible without setting up special conditions under which the reserves of a human body could be effectively revealed and used. We believe the most efficient method to intensify the teaching process in one which not only gives good final results but is also economic concerning the time consumed and the efforts of the instructor and learner. A method which activates intellectual work makes for the removal of natural tiredness, i.e. provides for a psychophysical effect. Among the factors defining the intensification of teaching are the productivity of the learner/instructor, and the rational distribution and structure of educational information.

3. Ways to Optimize Teaching English

Rhythmopedia (developed by the specialists of the Kishinev State University; Foreign Languages Department) is a method stipulating for the intensification of teaching. It involves the intensive presentation of foreign language information against a background of rhythmostimulation, retention of such material in memory by means of technical teaching aids and its actualization in classroom group communication. The method serves as contributory factor for the active assimilation of a considerable amount of information and the development of the learner's imaginative abilities. Rhythmopedia is a teaching method which presupposes a whole complex of interdependent methods and mutually conditioned internal and external factors to ensure the intensification of the foreign languages teaching process. Rhythmostimulation is a tool which enables to improve work of memory, to activate attention and to remove tiredness.

Multiple test show that the most effective memorization of linguistic information takes place with the human brain in an intermediate state, not in its maximum activity or active wakefulness. Rhythmostimulation is one of the means to bring the brain into such state. Rhythmostimulation is a biorhythmic effect with physical factors (light, color, sound and music) onto the optic and auditory centers of brain. In the process of memorization most parts of information are fixed by memory consciously; at the same time there exist another part of information which is memorized unconsciously. This fact is explained by the specific state of human mentality, as in the case of the decrease in wakefulness level and muscle relaxation, combined with some special forms of the material presentation. The same information presented in visual and aural images simultaneously results in a rapid increase in the volume of the memorized information. Hence audiovisual presentation of material done with technical teaching aids acquires crucial importance. It makes for the realization of the most important didactic principle: the combination of visual and aural aids.

The successful functioning of rhythmopedia is determined by:

- the rhythmic work of students during rhythmopedic show
- the rhythmic character of the presentation of the rhythmostimulation elements
- the rhythmic organization of material, i.e. presentation of materials in the form of interdependent sensory fragments
- the rhythmic way of presenting material for learning during the memorization show, i.e. within strictly set time intervals
- the rhythmic character of the accompanying music
- the rhythmic work of students while doing the laboratory work
- the rhythmic/ regular changes in various types of classroom activity
- the rhythmic repetition of all rhythmopedia elements within a cycle

The basic idea of rhythmopedia is the utilization of gradually decreasing rhythm in the process of learning in order to set an organism into a state in which the work of the brain is made more active. Rhythm is used as an instrument to adapt the students' organism to the process of learning. Rhythmopedia as a methodological complex presupposes the organization of students' independent work and a stage which consists of the organized classwork. The work based on the method comprises the following stages:

- Presentation of new material during a rhythmopedic show in special laboratory.
- Memorization of the presented material during the laboratory work.
- Actualization of the presented and primarily memorized material in English-speaking environment in real-life communication practiced during the instructors/students' classwork.

Rhythmopedia provides for:

- 1) an increase in the volume and durability of new material memorization;
- 2) effective control over the independent work of students;
- 3) group-communication during the classes using the students' knowledge of the new material;
- 4) stimulation of learning;
- 5) the development of skills, understanding, abilities and knowledge in various communicative situations.

The method serves as contributory factor for the active assimilation of a considerable amount of information and the development of imaginative abilities in a student.

4. Classroom Management

To get the desired results the whole process of the teaching has been re-considered: including the class-rooms, used materials and text-books, given tasks and played roles. The cadets are supposed to play their part in one and rather long-lasting play named "A daily routine of a deck/ engine officer in charge of a watch". The syllabus of each cycle has been thoroughly worked out to include materials mostly required for seafarers when abroad. The materials to be used by the instructors in their classwork include but not limited by the information presented during the rhythmopedic show and then revised at the laboratory work. The rhythmopedic show consisting of about 75 phrases containing new words, word combinations and grammar material is minimum to begin the work on the whole theme. On the average we study one theme a week, but the very theme could be rather capacious. For example, when studying Shopping one has to be able not only to do the shopping somewhere, but express his attitude to the purchased goods, exchange opinion on the quality and price of the things, complain of the bought articles, say compliments, etc. While studying Places where one lives a student has to be able to invite his new acquaintance to his place, explain how to get there and how long can the road take. The first cycle includes such topics as description of a ship; duties and responsibilities of the ship's crew, watchkeeping, piloted movement, etc. The principles of VHF communication, cables and telexes-writing, as well as other equally important information is studied by the third year cadets. The second stage of language learning includes the ships' clearing in/out procedure; shipboard papers; cargo works, etc. The fifth year cadets have to study accidents at sea and their prevention; environment pollution prevention; GMDSS procedures, etc. Radio communication and paperwork(writing practice) - are the integral aspects of each cycle. The topics for the discussion at the general English classes include the information and situations a seafarer meets when being in foreign countries, i.e. introduction, checking in/out at the hotel, at the doctor, shopping, etc. Instructors are recommended to establish micro-situations from real life, where students cannot have failed to use the material presented during the rhythmopedic show and primarily memorized during the laboratory work. Grammar, vocabulary and phonology are the three language systems that make up the building blocks of English. They are the integral part of the whole system, but we do not teach English explaining it, we teach English through English. An instructor both of professional and general English does his best to establish an English-speaking environment in the classroom and the specific atmosphere of friendliness, positive emotions. We practice periods of relaxation during the classes, as a student has to stay in the classroom for about six hours per day. Jokes, funny and curious stories are the everyday practice of the instructors. Drawing pictures can assist in memorization of the mooring ropes, parts of ships especially for those learners who have good motor memory. The instructors of general English use the existing course *Tune into English* : songs help much to cope with some difficult language aspects, like phonology. Even the special course "Tune into Maritime English" has been developed, singing songs "Taking a pilot on board" or "Clearing the Ship Inward", etc. the cadets can practice and learn how to properly pronounce the words and improve their knowledge of the standard phrases for communication at sea. Sometimes instructors practice not the real-life situations but they use some fantastic, hard-to-believe models and situations. Most of our learners are young 18-20 year people rather inexperienced, some of them tend to say I don't know what to do under the circumstances or I don't have the slightest idea. But if they are forced (by the instructors formulating the tasks during the classes or some other way) to react, to communicate even in these situations they are no doubt will be able to find their way in any even the most difficult circumstances. A set of computer tests based on the studied materials, home-reading of the IMO Resolutions, other conventional documents, pilot book, COLREGS, etc. help to keep the desired level of the cadets' motivation and verify their knowledge and understanding of the various aspects of maritime English. We also believe that the competence of the instructors in the issues dealing with the shipboard routine of the watch officers, their desire for self-education and utilization of the latest technologies in teaching, as well as well-prepared and timely updated materials will keep in line with the required level of the graduates' proficiency.

5. Summary

It is the issue of the utmost importance that a seafarer has an ability to create safe and efficient voyages especially in multilingual crew. The step on the way to success in it is the language competence of a seafarer.

Not a single deck officer can pretend to be called a professional without this basic knowledge. No matter the approach, method or whatever practices in learning English used; one can select from the best of many methods. The aforementioned approach is the combined effort of the DALRYBVTUZ Foreign Languages Department instructors to reach the most important goal — to teach a cadet the way he is able to comply with the STCW requirements to ensure accident-free ship's operation.

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