

A TEACHING AND LEARNING RESEARCH MODEL FOR MARITIME ENGLISH COURSES

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ABSTRACT

Special ship operations present communication problems and challenges with multicultural crews. Although the International Safety Management (ISM) Code concentrates on communication in a common language that makes clear the implementation of shipboard procedures, the interpretation of written and oral procedures and commands as well as responses to them are often different from the original intention. The concept of Maritime English is thus restricted by the requirements of the IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases and the IMO Model Course 3.17 Maritime English. Lack of operational-level knowledge of English can be the root cause of casualties. Management-level knowledge of English helps to minimize communication problems and to prevent the recurrence of these casualties. Corrective and preventive action processes also require knowledge of written English in order to submit commitments to external parties. The common language of claim handling is English as well, with relevant correspondence and objective evidence stated in a reporting mechanism. Clearly, it is impossible to cover this topic with Standard Marine Communication Phrases in current Maritime English courses. This study evaluates the actual expectations and needs of stakeholders in the shipping business like ship management performance due to the requirements of flag states and port states and compares them with the existing content of Maritime English Courses. Shipboard safety as well as environmental management systems require the implementation of English as a second language. This directly affects the training needs and methodologies at Maritime Education and Training Institutions. Maritime English courses are discussed and a model is proposed for management-level knowledge requirements of Maritime English.

KEY WORDS: Maritime English, Integrated Management Systems Teaching, Teaching Methodology

1. Introduction

Maritime English is restricted by the requirements of the IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases. The use of written and oral English for navigation officers and an adequate knowledge of English to enable the engineering officers to use English publications to perform duties are stated by the STCW Code in accordance with A II/1 and A III/1 IMO (1995). The IMO Model Course 3.1 Maritime English is the other reference, and serves as a minimum requirement to teach the student nautical terms and basic shipboard phrases including basic engineering terminology. However, the actual expectations and needs of stakeholders in the shipping business should be integrated with the existing Maritime English courses to produce a more efficient and effective model for these courses.

There has always been a strong motivation for young people to become seafarers in order to learn history and experience the cultures of other countries. But seamen must also live and work together with people of diverse cultures in a closed community over a long period of time. The frequent turnover of a ship's crew is common practice and new crew members have to integrate quickly and effectively. Despite modern technology, seafaring still demands that a seaman maintain her or his best effort and high skills. Unforeseeable elements and continuously changing operating scenarios require strong efforts and clear decision-making capabilities. No machine can or will replace a seaman; the human being remains the decisive factor.

Taking into consideration the above professional constraints, masters and senior officers should have both the professional expertise and the language skills to reduce the risks that affect the quality of ship management service.

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Although most masters and senior officers are not native speakers of English, they do try to carry out their professional activities in English. Thus the English training needs of masters and senior officers should be reviewed and will be discussed more precisely in the following sections of this article.

2. Identification of Advanced Expectations

English as a second language has an important role for the efficient implementation of international requirements for non-native speakers who are employed as masters and senior officers. With the success of a Safety Management System implementation at ship management companies, there has been a significant move by many shipping companies towards ISO 9001:2000 and ISO 14001 certification (Er (2001)). Now the most popular ship-operating organizations and ship-management companies are implementing the requirements of Quality, Safety, and Environmental Management Standards.

Under increasing pressure from authorities like Port State Controls and P&I (Protection and Indemnity) Club and Insurance requirements, and also under pressure to maintain classification matters and ensure clients satisfaction, ship management companies are being forced to provide proof of the quality of their management (Er et al (2001)). Management of the statutory certificate requirements like Safety Construction, Safety Equipment, International Oil Pollution Prevention, Safety Radio Telegraphy, Loadline, Minimum Safe Manning, and other classification requirements, especially the ISM Code IACS (1996) and registration of the ISO 9002 (1994 version), are carried out by the ship management companies (Er and Sogut, 1999). The ship management companies who have registered Quality Assurance certificates are now under pressure to establish their management practices in accordance with the year 2000 revision of the ISO 9000 standards.

At the present, a key goal in the shipping business is that top management of ship management companies get involved in the establishment, maintenance, and improvement of the quality management systems. This includes defining quality policy and measurable quality objectives (relevant to different functions and levels), quality planning, reviewing system effectiveness, identifying opportunities for continual improvement, providing sufficient resources, strengthening internal communication to ensure that all employees are aware of the importance of satisfying the requirements of the IMO's Conventions, and a charterer's needs and expectations. To enhance charterer confidence, ship management companies must determine overall charterer needs and expectations (including the IMO's Conventions, Port State Control requirements, Insurance and P&I Club requirements and applicable regulatory requirements like port of call etc.), and convert them into quality system requirements.

To ensure that the above requirements are met, masters and chief engineers need to establish formal arrangements to communicate with related parties about inquiries and complaints regarding non-conforming service or any other feedback from the customers about the carriage of cargo. In addition to that, the masters and chief engineers, the key drivers of this business, need to establish procedures and methodologies for measuring satisfaction, for defining the standard to be achieved, as well as for reviewing the nature and frequency of measurement. When the standard is not met, improvement actions need to be implemented, and results have to be evaluated and fed back to top management.

To comply with the Resource Management requirements for staff who affect the shipping business quality, the company needs not only to provide adequate training, but also to review the effectiveness of the training, to ensure that the staff is competent and continuing to improve. Furthermore, the company also has to identify, set up, and maintain the information, facilities (including hardware and software facilities, with supporting services), and the work environment (including crew health and safety, work methods and ergonomics). These items are not clearly indicated by any international standards or IMO conventions, especially for the shore-based staff competency at ship management companies.

3. Model For Management Level Requirements

The multicultural character of the crews causes additional communication problems and challenges. The IMO has recognized the wide use of the English language for international navigation communications and needs to assist maritime training institutions in meeting the objectives of safe operation of ships and enhanced navigational safety through the standardization of language and terminology. On the recommendation of the Maritime Safety Committee, the IMO Assembly adopted Resolution A.918(22) in November 2001 to address this issue. The purpose of the Standard Marine Communication Phrases is to assist in the greater safety of navigation and of the conduct of the ship, to standardize the language used in communication for navigation at sea, in port-approaches, in waterways harbours and on board vessels with multi-lingual crews, and to assist maritime training institutions in meeting the objectives mentioned above. STCW.7/Circ.11 (2001). It is intended that through constant repetition on ships and in training establishments ashore, the phrases and terms used in the Standard Marine Communication Phrases will become those normally accepted and commonplace among seafarers and should be used as often as possible in preference to other wording of similar meaning.

The question arises whether the Standard Marine Communication Phrases are sufficient to comply with the expectations of stakeholders and mandatory international requirements of rules and regulations that are stated in SOLAS, MARPOL, COLREG, LOADLINE conventions and other international standards. It is impossible to cover all the needs with Standard Marine Communication Phrases. These phrases might be only a portion of Maritime English without including marine engineering terminology, relations with port state controls, classification societies, P&I Clubs, contingency management etc. In this respect the philosophy of the teaching model and knowledge management processes that are illustrated in Fig.1 and Fig.2 could be utilised for the curriculum development phase of Maritime English for seafarers to assure the satisfaction of life-long expectations.

Knowledge Management Process

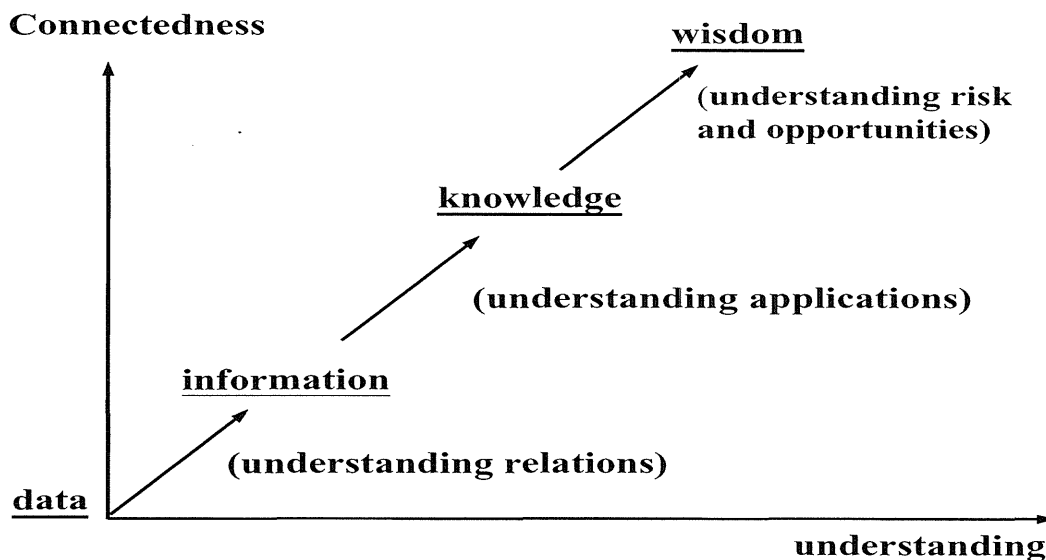


Fig. 1 Teaching Management for Knowledge Management

Taking into account the perspective of Management-Level Maritime English knowledge, the following modules are proposed in Table 1 for covering the needs of the maritime industry.

Table 1. Proposed Modules for Management Level Knowledge Requirements

MODULE - I		MODULE - II	
1.	Identification of ships, and merchant ship classification	6.	Analysis of ship s constructive parts, sections, machinery equipment identification for various types of ships.
2.	Ship Dimensions & Tonnage	7.	Principles of Classification Society Surveys & PSC inspections for various types of ships in accordance with SOLAS Conventional requirements
3.	Commercial Ship Management	8.	Principles of Classification Society Surveys & PSC inspections for various types of ships in accordance with MARPOL Conventional requirements
4.	Technical Ship Management	9.	Ship s Trading and Statutory Certificates
5.	Identification & functions of stakeholders of a Ship Management Company	10.	Surveys & Assessment Principles of Statutory Certificates
MODULE - III			
11.	Principles of Correspondence & Job Application	14.	Spare Parts, Store Requisition, Supply Correspondence
12.	Preparations & Recording of Shipboard Performance Records	15.	Non Conformance Management including Accidents, Hazardous Occurrence Reporting
13.	Principles of Planning Maintenance Systems	16.	Docking preparations, records & relating correspondence

4. Conclusion

Eighty-five percent of current sea accidents occur due to human failure. In an emergency, communication problems between crew members can make the situation worse. These problems are typical in multi-national crews where the first language is not English. Due to misunderstandings and ambiguity, less critical situations have already turned to tragic catastrophes. The world s largest container vessels and even tankers are operated by less than twenty people. This reduction of crew members leads to a concentration of responsibilities. Specialists responsible for particular tasks are now replaced by just one person responsible for several tasks. Although this situation is sufficient for normal operation, the crew members will very likely lack specialized knowledge for emergency situations. In case of an accident this particular expert knowledge will be crucial.

Lack of operational-level knowledge of English is not the only cause of these casualties. Management-level knowledge of English will also minimize the defects and prevent the recurrence of these deficiencies. The corrective and preventive action process also requires knowledge of written English for submitting commitments to external parties. The common language of claim handling is English as well, so relevant correspondence and the objective evidence should be clearly stated in the reporting mechanism. It is impossible to cover these topics with Standard Marine Communication Phrases.

In addition, relations with Port State Control Inspectors, Classification Society surveyors, P&I Club surveyors require a technical based oral and written English to clarify the nature of the subject on board the ship. The content of Standard Marine Communication Phrases is not adequate to manage these communications.

To overcome all the above constraints with the proposed management-level English knowledge modules, life-long training is the best solution. Reduced crews demand a broader knowledge of each crew member. But this impairs the availability of knowledge and so the ability to respond effectively in the case of emergency. Theoretical and some practical training can be done ashore, where training centers and excellent trainers are available. That means that training will be initiated in training institutions, but not effectively activated for the specific practices prior to joining ship; training will be continued on board after embarkation. This result

requires a cross-reference between clause 6 of the ISM Code and STCW Code. The proposed modules require lifelong learning with the following objectives:

- Basic training is the responsibility of the training institutions
- The operation of equipment and machinery as well as shipboard procedures are the responsibilities of both training institutions and ship managers.
- Continuous training on board ships is the responsibility of the ship managers and manning agencies in cooperation with the training institutions.

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