30th
International
Maritime
Lecturers
Association
Conference
Split
Croatia
www.imla30.org

ENGLISH FOR SEAFARERS – THE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR TEACHING ESP

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Abstract. The article focuses on *English for Seafarers* and issues related to teaching maritime English (e.g., ESP – *English for Specific Purposes*) using commonly accessible modern information technologies. The main problem faced by the teachers of specialized language in the maritime industry is the limited number of appropriate textbooks. And since the maritime English is a narrow and highly sophisticated specialization, the content of the ready for use textbooks does not always fully meet the needs of both the students and the lecturers. The aim of the article is to present educational maritime resources available online, such as: websites with popular science articles (4), YouTube channels with educational videos (3), educational materials shared by teachers and maritime schools worldwide (3), materials provided by maritime institutions (3), etc; maritime dictionaries (3), popular interactive websites (3), computer programmes/apps (2), audio material/podcast (1). For the purpose of this article the online educational maritime resources were grouped in the above mentioned 8 categories, which are arbitrary and represent an individual choice of the author. Moreover, one particular example of a YouTube movie *Understanding English onboard ship: Normal operations, Bridge Routines* was chosen to show how Internet resources can facilitate the teaching process of navigators in class. When using the online sources, an important skill is first to select the available specialized material and then change, design it into valuable, innovative teaching exercises. The handouts prepared in this way are tailored to the professional needs of students, who get an opportunity to practice and develop the skills required by the maritime industry. Thus, the deployment of the smart, digital technologies for teaching ESP in class helps students learn to communicate at work better and carry out their duties at sea more effectively.

Keywords: ESP; English for Seafarers; New Technologies; The Internet; Online Materials.

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https://doi.org/10.7225/imla30.38

1. INTRODUCTION

This article explores the professional language used by seafarers and issues related to teaching Maritime English (a branch of ESP – English for Specific Purposes, specifically English for Seafarers) using modern information technologies. One of the main challenges faced by teachers of specialized maritime English is the limited availability of subject-specific teaching materials. On the publishing market, resources dedicated to Maritime English are limited. Furthermore, this area is so narrow and complex that even textbooks developed in cooperation with maritime industry professionals often fail to fully meet the learners' needs.

Technological advancements in the maritime industry are only partially reflected in existing educational resources. In contrast, the Internet responds more swiftly to changes in the maritime economy, serving as a rich source of knowledge and practical materials. These online resources often align better with students' professional needs—primarily, the effective use of a foreign language in highly specialized maritime communication context. Another important aspect is that the seafaring community actively uses information technologies to share their expertise and experiences. Enthusiasts of maritime professions publish videos, write articles, and report on maritime incidents.

2. DEFINITION OF MARITIME ENGLISH AS A SPECIALIZED LANGUAGE

In academic literature, specialized language—also referred to as professional or occupational language—is defined as language for specific professional purposes. In the context of foreign language education aimed at vocational sectors, specialized communication focuses on professional topics and meets the so-called "domain criterion" (Magdalena Sowa, 2016:5).

The main goal of such communication is effective and appropriate information exchange between participants who already possess domain-specific knowledge and skills. Language becomes a tool for acquiring additional professional competencies and for performing job-related tasks. While domain relevance is a core feature of specialized language, it is not sufficient on its own to define it. Situational factors and the linguistic competence of discourse participants also play a crucial role (Sowa, 2016:5), as the range of professional knowledge and language skills among interlocutors may vary. As a result, the boundary between general and specialized language is fluid—conversation between two experts differs significantly from dialogue between an expert and a layperson.

Specialized language reflects the progress and development of a given society (Grucza, 2009: 16–19). This is particularly evident in maritime discourse. The rapid advancement of the global maritime economy extends beyond national borders. Seafarers, sailors, engineers, and architects collaborate internationally in a sector that spans major ports, shipyards, and marinas across the world. Globalization accelerates the spread of new technologies and inventions within the maritime domain. These innovations require new terminology: loading equipment, ship types, and navigation systems all need updated and precise terms.

Applying the "domain" criterion to Maritime English, we observe that it is used by professionals not only at sea (seafarers and fishermen) but also on land—by port workers, shipyard staff, and personnel from maritime agencies, universities, and academies. Communication on board a vessel requires not only proficiency in Maritime English but also domain-specific linguistic and professional competence. Unlike general English, used by average speakers, Maritime English contains specialized vocabulary and terminology that reflect the tradition and specific realities of life and work at sea.

Ana Bocanegra-Valle (2012) defines "Maritime English as an umbrella term which refers to the English language used by seafarers both at sea and in port and by individuals working in the shipping and shipbuilding industry".

3. NEW TECHNOLOGIES AS A SOURCE OF SPECIALIZED MATERIALS

Information technologies serve as essential tools in the teaching of specialized languages. They enhance the learning experience and enrich classroom activities with practical, relevant, and up-to-date teaching aids. The key value of these tools lies in their vocational context and their integration within the framework of professional discourse.

The primary goal of vocational language teaching is to prepare future seafarers to perform essential duties specific to their profession. English is the lingua franca of international maritime operations and is used daily by multinational crews and coastal station operators, who communicate about weather conditions and vessel traffic. Students need practice in using standard phrases and expressions to develop the necessary linguistic competence and function effectively in maritime communication.

Elżbieta Gajewska and Magdalena Sowa (2014) categorized professional languages into four areas: business and economics, tourism and hospitality, medicine, and scientific-technical language—the

latter being the most closely aligned with the vocabulary of Maritime English. Online sources for scientific-technical language include popular science websites, professional association pages, and information about devices and technologies.

A more detailed and maritime-focused list of online resources includes:

- Online editions of maritime magazines with popular science articles, eg.:
  - Marine Insight
  - Global Maritime Forum
  - Safety4Sea
  - Afloat.ie
  - ShipExpert
  - The Maritime Post
- Computer programs for learning Maritime English:
  - MarEng
- Teaching materials provided by teachers and maritime schools worldwide, e.g.:
  - Textbooks by Norwegian teachers: marfaf.no
  - Training videos and presentations: e.g., YouTube example
  - Materials shared by the Lawhill Maritime Centre maritimesa.org;
- Industry-specific materials from maritime institutions:
  - Information on the activities of ports, maritime services, etc., such as Port of Melbourne – Australia's Best Connected Port – portofmelbourne.com,
  - Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management – english.ilent.nl;
  - British Admiralty – admiralty.co.uk;
  - Audio materials, e.g., examples of communication via radio (VHF), such as between a pilot station and a ship, or between a VTS station and a ship, e.g., VHF Maritime Communications;
- Maritime vocabulary dictionaries:
  - Visual Dictionary Online,
  - Maritime Industry Knowledge Center Glossary,
  - Port of Melbourne – glossary https://www.portofmelbourne.com/news-publications/glossary/
- Interactive vocabulary learning platforms:
  - Quizlet
  - Quizziz
  - Kahoot

These platforms offer quizzes and vocabulary tests that can be used during class, for homework, or as assessments. They also allow teachers to create customized activities using available images and music. An additional advantage is their continuous improvement – adapting quizzes to the needs of students and teachers. For instance, Kahoot now presents feedback on errors after completing an activity rather than after each individual question, allowing teachers to address mistakes in real time. Students respond positively to such interactive tasks, as they make vocabulary acquisition more engaging and effective.

4. APPLICATION OF SPECIALIZED MATERIALS – SAMPLE EXERCISES USING VIDEO

While learning commands in a foreign language, students develop their language skills and acquire knowledge about effective and safe communication on board a ship. YouTube videos that depict real-life maritime situations using professional language serve as excellent resources. This is an area where the language teacher must combine linguistic expertise with knowledge of the maritime domain. As Magdalena Sowa (2016) notes, "The competencies required to achieve educational goals in vocational language teaching fall into three main areas: linguistic knowledge, methodological skills, and familiarity with content related to the target professional domain."

As previously demonstrated, the internet offers a wealth of maritime-related content. Ultimately, however, it is the teacher who decides which materials to use. YouTube tutorials and training videos often feature realistic maritime scenarios involving professional communication. For example, at the link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3ukzMCpAEg, we find examples of specialized communication using commands that concern, among others, communication on the bridge, maneuvering and steering, pilot embarkation, bunkering, etc. They serve as a tool for working on the current communication needs of students and illustrate the correct use of language in a professional context.

The video *"Understanding English on Board Ship"*, Part 1: *"Normal Operations," "Bridge Routines"*, lasts less than six minutes and consists of two stages: the first presents officers using maritime phrases on the bridge without any subtitles, and the second involves repeating the presented commands according to the subtitles appearing on the screen. The second part begins with listening to simple sentences and repeating them, followed by longer and more complex commands practiced in the same way.

An advantage of working on specialized communication using videos is the ability to focus on pronunciation, which often poses a challenge—especially for students with a lower level of language proficiency. During further practice to master the content, students perform similar scenes as role plays and complete sentences from the watched video by inserting the missing terms.

5. SUMMARY

In the face of a lack of appropriate specialized materials, the solution comes from new technologies, which are becoming increasingly widespread. In the teaching of specialized languages, information technologies are a necessity, and this article presents a small sample of the possibilities the Internet offers. Information technologies are a part of everyday life in the teaching of specialized languages, and the search by teachers for their own solutions and ideas to conduct lessons with their help makes the language learning process unique and interesting.

The most important goal is to continuously improve students' language skills by referring to the professional context and the needs of a specific profession. Depending on the educational objectives, we choose appropriate methods and teaching materials, focused on the recipient. Recognition of the actual communication needs in the teaching of specialized languages, arising from the necessity for students to perform specific professional tasks, provides learners with language skills that are an essential tool for entering the profession they are trained for in the future.

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