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## ESP Teachers and their Vital Role in Crossing Maritime Communication Barriers

# ESP TEACHERS AND THEIR VITAL ROLE IN CROSSING MARITIME COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

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**Abstract**. The global network of shipping that spans the oceans and links every continent in the world is the international maritime sector. In this transnational, multi-ethnic, and multicultural setting, English has become the Lingua Franca of the sea. It is the method by which language barriers are overcome and communication occurs. However, as several maritime accidents demonstrate, seamanship does not always guarantee an adequate comprehension. Phase, sphere, and universe transitions are represented by crossing, which is a characteristic of the communication process, a component of the communicative order and has important implications for maintaining interpersonal relationships and enhancing communicative skills. Two main obstacles to communication at sea are the challenges faced by certain language learners in learning the required language, Maritime English, and the sociolinguistic and cultural beliefs and customs that can make it difficult for people to understand one another. It concludes that teaching maritime English requires the adoption of an appropriate methodology. By using new innovative methods and techniques, the maritime English teachers can produce fluent mariners who can encode and decode messages accurately. Communication is mandatory for maritime safety, security, safe navigation and maritime business. Seafarers need communication on board ships and this communication is mostly done through English, and definitely with the help of an English teacher.

Key words: Lingua Franca, Maritime English (ME), ESP teacher, communication barriers.

## 1. Introduction

Cross-cultural interaction is expanding in our global economy. The growing marine trade in ports worldwide highlights the necessity of standardized education and training to handle new global technology and logistical frameworks. People with diverse worldviews may have difficulties with misconceptions and misinterpretations when working, studying, and engaging in cross-cultural environments. The International Maritime Industry (IMI) is a worldwide network of shipping that unites sailors from various national, ethnic, linguistic backgrounds, and connects all continents. Humans communicate in one way or another wherever they go, and being able to communicate effectively is essential to maritime safety. Since Maritime English (ME) has created, altered, or adopted numerous terminology and phrases from other languages that are exclusively used in the IMI, one believes that maritime English qualifies as a special-purpose variety of English.

Phase, sphere, and universe transitions are represented by crossing, which is a characteristic of the communication process and has important implications for maintaining interpersonal relationships and enhancing communicative skills. In super diversity multilingual situations as well as monolingual contexts, crossing is a component of a communicative order. A new communication order is emerging in the context of mobility and variety in the face of globalization. The concentration on linguistic medium, rhetorical mirror effect and theatrical code-switching define this new order of linguistic communication. Owing to the movement of human resources, innovative approaches must be used to overcome obstacles that a monolingual crossing could not.

## 2. English as the Lingua Franca

The international marine sector is the worldwide shipping network that crosses the oceans and connects all of the continents. In this international, multiracial, and multicultural context, English has emerged as the maritime equivalent of the Lingua Franca. It is generally agreed upon as the means of bridging linguistic gaps and facilitating communication. Nonetheless, as multiple maritime mishaps have shown, seamanship does not always imply complete and sufficient comprehension. As stated by Suhrab and Rizani (2019) a "seafarer ability to communicate to an acceptable standard of English is very essential and important in the present industry"(14). The difficulties that language learners encounter when learning Maritime English and the cultural and sociolinguistic attitudes, and norms that may make it difficult for individuals to understand one another are the two key barriers to efficient communication at sea. As a result, employing a methodology that is both culturally and pedagogically sound is necessary while teaching Maritime English.

In the last twenty-five years or so, the crews of about 80% of the merchant ships in the globe are bilingual and multiethnic. A commercial ship's crew currently consists of fewer people in addition to a more diverse group of individuals. Therefore, loneliness, worry, and exhaustion might result from this alone. In the event that communication issues also contribute to a lack of trust, mistrust, and misunderstandings, there will be more chances for human mistake to result in risks to the environment, the ship, and the people on board. Since the ship serves as a self-contained unit and provides housing and employment for seafarers, it must fulfill a number of purposes and communication needs. Clear verbal contact between ships and shore stations is required in coastal waters and during port pilotage. Additionally, in situations where navigation becomes difficult or there are traffic jams, ships need to be able to communicate with one another. Proper interaction when operating the vessel, delivering and carrying out directions under regular and emergency conditions, and communication among the crew are also necessary to ensure social harmony during off-duty hours and, consequently, teamwork.

*2.1    Maritime English-teaching and learning approaches.* The world of education is diverse, with many different views, techniques, and values. It is crucial to take into account the system that fits our learning styles while deciding what is best for us. Modern methodology of teaching ESP must be a blend of traditional teacher-centered approach, a more modern learner-centered approach and an innovative integrated multidisciplinary approach.

In the conventional teaching method, also known as the teacher-centred approach, the teacher or lecturer has control over the learning environment. In this approach, power and responsibility lie with the lecturer, who acts as the instructor and decision-maker in the classroom. The lecturer imparts information and knowledge about the course or subject to the students, systematically covering various topics. Learning in this approach usually involves lectures or assigned reading, followed by tests through predetermined questions based on the information imparted. The expected solutions to these questions are usually limited to the information presented to the students. In addition, the solutions are predetermined, often with answer schemes provided by the lecturer, and they are geared towards specific learning objectives. According to Shi and Fan(2021) this is still the most used teaching method in the ME in China.(12)

The modern approach to teaching, known as the learner-centred approach, differs from the traditional method in several aspects, including content, teaching and learning methods, classroom

environment, assessment, and integration of technology. In this approach, both teachers and students actively participate in the learning process. The teacher's role is primarily to guide and facilitate the students' learning by providing general guidance on the subject matter. Student learning is assessed through various formal and informal methods such as group projects and class participation, with teaching and assessment being closely linked. The learner-centred approach encourages student engagement, supports the development of soft skills, and increases motivation. This method encourages active student participation and creates a two-way learning environment where students are encouraged to ask questions directly during lectures.

Instead of attempting to connect seemingly unconnected pieces of our education, multidisciplinary learning is a great method to integrate it into a whole. There are several advantages to using an interdisciplinary approach in education. In every way, the strategies, tactics, and abilities taught in English language classes can be applied to other subject areas. A multidisciplinary approach to teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) integrates language instruction with content from various disciplines relevant to students' academic or professional fields. In this approach, language learning is not taught in isolation but is integrated with subject-specific content, such as business, engineering, medicine, or law. By incorporating authentic materials and tasks from different disciplines, students develop both language proficiency and subject-specific knowledge simultaneously. This approach not only enhances students' language skills but also equips them with the specialized vocabulary and communication strategies necessary for success in their chosen field. An example of "an authentic style of learning is spoken maritime English using marine simulators"; this covers communication between different compartments onboard ship, as well as communication with other vessels, pilot stations, port authorities etc. by radio stated  James, Schriever, Jahangiri & Girgin in  2018.(7)

Multidisciplinary teaching facilitates this type of transfer in Maritime Education and Training (MET) institutions. A curriculum that is interdisciplinary takes a single subject and examines it from the perspectives of multiple disciplines.(9) The MET institutions work to incorporate interdisciplinary education into their curriculum because they recognize its benefits. Multiple teachers must work closely together to produce an integrated, enhanced learning experience for students across various disciplines in order to implement this holistic approach to education. When students use the ME skills to record and analyze all of the information they have been taught, as well as to interact with instructors, other students, and professionals in the marine sector, they learn more. English teachers in MET institutions should: have a good command in the language; follow curricula and continuously add other topics as needed;  demonstrate preparedness for class; have a degree in English as their major field of study; effectively foster a learning environment and run the classroom; deliver their lessons in a clear and logical manner;  provide comments to help students improve in class and gain confidence speaking the language; offer activities that allow students to practice communicating in English for maritime purposes; and, last but not least, provide alternative explanations to students who do not understand the lesson. Studies also show that Maritime English instructors come up with a wide range of innovative methods to implement their teachings and give students an enhanced learning environment. In addition, it is obvious that Maritime English is taught in the form of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course.

*2.2    Teachers and/or instructors in Maritime English.* The proficiency of teachers in ME is also very important. Task-based language teaching (TBLT), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and Content-Based Instruction (CBI) are all options available to ME teachers. Cole, Pritchard & Trenkner (2007) assessed that teachers of general English must meet linguistic and pedagogical knowledge and skills requirements to become instructors in Maritime English, in accordance with STCW95 and other relevant legal instruments. Information and communication technology (ICT) is a useful tool for teaching students ME. (3) Teaching or studying ME should take into account the intercultural components of communication. To expedite their learning, learners should be encouraged to employ a variety of methods, including cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective ones. Learning

maritime terminology requires paying attention to the words' technical applications rather than their literal meanings. Respecting the other party's point of view is important, no matter the communication channel is either spoken or written. Hours of spoken English classes need to be expanded, and oral English practice can be facilitated by the use of multimedia, audio-video clips, the internet, and modern instructional equipment. Seafarers and students alike need to be acquainted with the traits of ME, including its written correspondence styles. Both students and graduates must comprehend the fundamentals of courtesy and the effects of society. Collaboration between professionals, students, and subject matter experts is also necessary. Speaking and writing are two productive skills students should be focused on. Those working in the marine industry should never forget that poor communication or inefficiency in English should never be the cause of a maritime incident.

There are several ways to reduce linguistic barriers in the maritime business:

- Specialized Language Training: Providing specialized language training in Maritime English for crew members and staff can improve communication skills and comprehension of maritime terminology. (13) (4)
- Standardized Terminology: Implementing standardized maritime terminology across all communications can help to avoid misunderstandings and improve clarity. (15) (6)
- Use of Technology: Utilizing translation tools, language learning apps, and multilingual communication platforms can aid in overcoming language barriers.(1)
- Cultural Sensitivity Training: Offering cultural sensitivity training can help crew members and staff understand and navigate linguistic and cultural differences effectively.(11)
- Clear Communication Protocols: Establishing clear communication protocols, including standardized forms and procedures, can help ensure that important information is communicated accurately and efficiently. (10)
- Multilingual Crews: Hiring multilingual crewmembers and staff can facilitate communication and help bridge language gaps onboard ships and in maritime businesses.(5)

By implementing these strategies where ME is essential, maritime businesses can effectively reduce linguistic barriers and improve communication and safety at sea.

First, sea safety: seafarer's safety depends on effective communication. The International Maritime Industry (IMI) brings diverse national, ethnic, and linguistic origins of mariners together. English acts as a common language for communication, or Lingua Franca. Competent communication guarantees efficient operations and reduces the risk of mishaps. Secondly, ME uses terms and special words that are specific to the industry. Imagine the situation where a Filipino crew member reported an accident that a British watch officer interpreted incorrectly or where a Portuguese seaman tried to report a fire threat but was unable to communicate appropriately. These incidents prove how important it is to speak and write Maritime English accurately. In the third place, Maritime English instructors are essential in teaching language proficiency. They regulate student behavior, assist with learning, and maintain order in the classroom. Teachers make sure that mariners develop the communication skills required for their responsibilities at sea by placing a strong emphasis on safety-to-practice. In the fourth place, the use of authentic instructional methods is crucial to improving maritime communication. Through these exercises, students are exposed to real-world situations and are able to successfully use their language skills.(15) Enhancing Maritime English proficiency can be achieved through discussing teaching strategies and working with industry stakeholders. To put it briefly, a maritime English teacher's job is to provide seafarers with the language skills they need to overcome communication barriers, improve safety, and encourage teamwork onboard.

## 3. Conclusion

The aforementioned highlights the fact that teachers are the most crucial and successful factor in helping students develop intercultural communicative competence when it comes to overcoming linguistic barriers in EFL instruction, the ME respectively. Maritime English is a professional subsystem of the English language (8) that has evolved throughout time in response to social needs in the shipping and seafaring industries. It is based on a variety of linguistic resources. ME is the

collection of specialized (mostly technical) sublanguages that work together to adequately describe all known material and non-material issues in maritime affairs. ME needs more in-depth study because it is communicative, conventional, and operational; this will ultimately lead to the development of new educational trends.

Despite the fact they don't use linguistics in everyday life, teachers still have a solid understanding of the subject. Professionally relevant ME programs are suggested by the linguistic approach. For instance, the language itself serves as the basis for explaining a ship's characteristics rather than the subject's technical essence. It illustrates how teachers at the tertiary level employ strategies to clarify linguistic difficulties in the target language by drawing parallels between native features that highlight related concepts in order to overcome language obstacles. The understanding of maritime English as a construct made up of numerous sublanguages influences the choice of ME instructional resources. As a result, while a language teacher and a specialist instructor create different ideas and strategies, they still collaborate frequently. This algorithm makes it easier to continue gaining professional information, abilities, and talents.

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