

## INTRODUCTION OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR TEACHING MARITIME ENGLISH AS A GUARANTEE OF SAFETY AT SEA

## ВПРОВАДЖЕННЯ МІЖНАРОДНИХ СТАНДАРТІВ ВИКЛАДАННЯ МОРСЬКОЇ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЯК ГАРАНТІЯ БЕЗПЕКИ МОРЕПЛАВСТВА

*Ukraine has undertaken to fully comply with international conventions in the field of navigation, which stipulate the mandatory use of either only English or the simultaneous use of one or more working languages and English. In view of this and taking into account the intensity of modernization processes in education, aimed at training highly competent maritime specialists, the requirements for the culture of professional communication in a foreign language, which requires mastering the appropriate speech skills, are increasing. This will allow students of the Maritime Academies to fully realize their professional potential in a foreign-language professional environment and to use modern foreign-language information sources to improve their professional level, carrying out full-fledged communication in a foreign language and, if necessary, to practice the acquired professional skills abroad during swimming practice.*

*In numerous articles and speeches, it has been repeatedly emphasized that inadequate knowledge of maritime English causes significant human and material losses, which, first of all, concerns seafarers for whom English is not their native language. In order to avoid such situations, the International Maritime Organization has approved the «International Maritime Organization (IMO) Standard Marine Phrases for Communication at Sea» used for communication at sea, on port approaches, waterways and harbors, as well as for inland ship communication. communication on ships with a multilingual team; to provide assistance to maritime educational institutions in achieving the above-mentioned goals.*

*Special attention is paid to researching the possibilities of a systematic approach to teaching standard phrases for communication at sea in communicative classes on Maritime English.*

*The analysis of the research results shows that researchers are paying more attention to the issue of numerous ship collisions that occur due to unsuccessful communicative attempts to resolve the situation, so a conversational form of communication is used instead of a standardized one. The consequences of ineffective communication on board are considered using the example of the largest tragedies at sea. Emphasis is placed on the importance of having a sufficient minimum of standard expressions for effective interaction in extreme situations.*

**Key words:** *maritime academy, maritime specialist, International Maritime Organization, IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases, communication at sea.*

*Україна зобов'язалася повністю дотримуватися міжнародних конвенцій у сфері навігації, які передбачають обов'язкове використання або лише англійської мови, або одночасне використання однієї чи кількох робочих мов та англійської. З огляду на це та враховуючи інтенсивність модернізаційних процесів в освіті, спрямованих на підготовку висококваліфікованих морських фахівців, підвищуються вимоги до культури професійного спілкування іноземною мовою, що вимагає оволодіння відповідними мовленнєвими навичками. Це дозволить студентам Морських академій повною мірою реалізувати свій професійний потенціал в іншомовному професійному середовищі та використовувати сучасні іншомовні джерела інформації для підвищення свого професійного рівня, здійснюючи повноцінне спілкування іноземною мовою та, за потреби, відпрацювати набуті професійні навички за кордоном під час практики з плавання.*

*У численних статтях і виступах неодноразово підкреслювалося, що недостатнє знання морської англійської мови спричиняє значні людські та матеріальні втрати, що, насамперед, стосується моряків, для яких англійська мова не є рідною. Щоб уникнути подібних ситуацій, Міжнародна морська організація затвердила «Стандартні морські фрази Міжнародної морської організації (ІМО) для спілкування на морі», які використовуються для спілкування на морі, на підходах до портів, водних шляхах і гаванях, а також для внутрішнього зв'язку суден.*

*Аналіз результатів дослідження показує, що дослідники все більше уваги приділяють питанню численних зіткнень суден, які відбуваються через невдалі комунікативні спроби вирішення ситуації, тому використовується розмовна форма спілкування замість стандартизованої. Наслідки неефективної комунікації на борту розглядаються на прикладі найбільших морських трагедій. Акцентується увага на важливості наявності достатнього мінімуму стандартних виразів для ефективного взаємодії в екстремальних ситуаціях.*

**Ключові слова:** *морська академія, морський спеціаліст, Міжнародна морська організація, стандартні фрази морського спілкування ІМО, спілкування на морі.*

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**Problem statement in general terms.** Over the past twenty years, experts have noted a decrease in the number of accidents at sea. If in the period from 1966 to 1985, according to Lloyd's Register, at least 300 ships were lost per year, then at the end of the 1990s, the number of accidents was less than 200 ships. This was facilitated, first of all, by the modernization of ship equipment and the improvement of operational characteristics of ships. Moreover, if

it was possible to significantly reduce the negative impact of a technical nature, it turned out to be much more difficult to neutralize the impact of natural and human factors on ship accidents. It is well known that one of the manifestations of the human factor on board is the quality of the communicative interaction of the members of the international crew, which in the conditions of a multinational team is manifested in the level of command of the English language, officially

recognized as the working language of professional and everyday communication on the ship.

**Analysis of recent studies and publications.**

The issue of peculiarities of English-language maritime communication was devoted to research by such scientists as Badawi E., Halawa A, Bocanegra-Valle A., Evangelos T. and many others.

**Provisions of the unresolved parts of the general problem.** It is known that losses due to incorrect or ineffective communication often reach catastrophic proportions. An example of irreparable damage to the environment is the accidental oil spill from the tanker "Sea Empress" as a result of the ship running aground. The Chinese tugboat, which soon arrived at the disaster zone, instead of the expected help, only worsened the situation by stranding the tanker again. The reason for such unprofessional actions was the impossibility of communication between the crews of both vessels since none of the tug crewmembers spoke English. As a result, the rescue operation turned out to be even more disastrous for the marine environment, increasing the oil spill from 2,500 to 72,000 tons [3]. Against the background of awareness of the severity of environmental consequences, the reason that led to them looks even more absurd. In support of this, we may cite the words of Lord J. Donaldson that it is difficult to imagine a greater need for a common language at sea than the sight of a huge Chinese rescue tug, whose help is impossible because none of the crew speak English [3, p. 59].

Even more tragic are the consequences of fatal accidents, such as the tragedy on the Swedish passenger ferry Scandinavian Star in 1990, when 158 people died in a fire on board, and poor English was cited as one of the causes of the tragedy. A misunderstanding between passengers and crewmembers that arose during the evacuation significantly increased the number of casualties. This and a number of other similar tragic events drew attention to the role of the human factor in the prevention of emergency situations on a ship, in particular, to such a component as knowledge of a common language and its competent use. The lack of coordinated actions of crew members due to incorrect or incomplete understanding of incoming commands, especially in extreme conditions, leads to irreparable consequences: the death of people, large-scale environmental disasters and serious economic losses due to damage or loss of transported goods.

**The purpose of the article.** The main purpose of the study is to establish the importance of following the recommendations of maritime conventions, as well as the importance of having professional English at a level sufficient to ensure the safety of navigation.

**Statement of the basic material.** Peculiarities of communication among the international crew are the subject of close attention of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which constantly

monitors the situation and takes special measures to improve it. Thus, at one time, the SeaSpeak project (1981–1985) was aimed at creating an optimal version of the English language for professional communication among sailors by using carefully thought-out and maximally simplified phrases, which are advantageously different from many similar in content but rather verbose expressions. Guided by the motto "International crew- international problems", the working group of the project created the so-called language for shipping, intended mainly for conducting radio communications at sea, which is why it had an extremely narrow scope of application. In addition, SeaSpeak touched only one of the aspects of the activity of shipmasters and was practically not in demand by other crewmembers [9]. Considering the specificity, the SeaSpeak practical course could be used in the educational process only in a narrow thematic context. Therefore, it was unsuitable for the comprehensive development of skills and abilities in listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, according to experts, after undergoing serious testing at sea and confirming its effectiveness, SeaSpeak, thanks to the conciseness and clarity of expressions, not only proved its effectiveness in ensuring communication between ships and shore services, but also retained its relevance until now.

However, the question of the correspondence of learned standard sea expressions to professional situations remained unresolved for a long time. In 1993, the process of revising the Standard Maritime Navigational Dictionary, first published in 1977 and revised in 1985, was initiated. The purpose of improving the dictionary was to improve the quality of information exchange between representatives of all maritime nationalities in cases where the accuracy of understanding and translation are quite doubtful [6].

The result of a seven-year revision was the Standard Phrases for Communication at Sea prepared in 1997 by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and tested over the next 4 years. During testing, the number of phrases initially selected was reduced from 3,000 to 1,700. Approved by the maritime administrations of the IMO member states in 2001, they were approved by a decision of the IMO Assembly and are still valid and mandatory for ship-to-ship or ship-to-shore communication [7; 8].

The standard phrases, written in strict accordance with the requirements of the STCW and SOLAS conventions, are a selection of individual phrases related to everyday professional duties and extreme situations on the vessel, such as providing weather data, ensuring the arrival and departure, towing request, reports on oil spills, collisions, transportation of dangerous goods, etc.

It should be noted that expert assessments regarding the appropriateness and reliability of the

proposed phrases differ. Many perceive them as “an artificial set of phraseological units, a long list of simplified sentences that confuse native English speakers” [2, p. 63]. Moreover, being essentially a kind of alternative language based on English, Standard Phrases call into question whether all native speakers learn them in order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding on board later [2]. In other words, the problem of imprecise and unclear understanding of standardized expressions remains unsolved, especially in crews where native speakers of English are present, for whom the fact of its distortion in the version recommended for use is obvious.

Meanwhile, Standard Phrases are widely acknowledged to be events of paramount importance to the establishment of English at sea [2]. They are an integral and priority component of the English language curriculum in all maritime educational institutions of 156 IMO member countries [3, p. 55]. However, they in no way serve as instructions for actions in extreme situations. On the contrary, their use for the ship's external communication is clearly consistent with the approved radiotelephone exchange procedures.

Overall, the Standard Phrases represent an example of a successful IMO project that has, over many years, contributed to improving the safety of navigation and ship management by standardizing the language used for communication at sea, on port approaches, in waterways and harbors, and for internal communication on ships with multilingual crew. Instead, scientists indicate the need for further improvement of this manual by overcoming its functional and technical orientation and filling it with social content to create a social context of professional activity and industrial relations on board.

It should be noted that research projects are a characteristic feature of IMO activity. Understanding the project as a temporary measure that involves the implementation of a set of any actions to achieve certain goals, we note the high reactivity of the IMO to innovative trends in the industry, including the rapid development of technologies, the growing number of multilingual and multicultural crews, the transition within a maritime career with wider opportunities for professional self-realization. Accordingly, the immediate actions were: new safety requirements, new criteria for the success of communication at sea, the merger of educational and training systems in many countries, etc.

In order to ensure effective social interaction on board, IMO experts within the framework of the European MARCOM project conducted a study of the features of communication in a multilingual and multicultural crew for two years (1998-1999). In addition, in response to constructive comments regarding the lack of a clear vision of the content of training, the nature of the organization of English language training for future sailors in maritime educational

institutions around the world was studied in parallel. Many related tasks were solved during the project:

- typical mistakes in the course of professional and everyday communication of the members of the mixed crew causing events of various kinds like emergency situations and accidents;
- the need to take into account language and cultural differences for the harmonious work of the team was substantiated;
- the actual topic of interpersonal and professional communication on the ship was established by means of a questionnaire, on the basis of which the requirements for the content of general and maritime English language courses were formulated;
- requirements for the qualification of knowledge and experience of English language teachers in maritime educational institutions were defined;
- options for cooperation with subject teachers were proposed for the reliability and validity of knowledge formed by means of the English language and improving the quality of education;
- recommendations on the integration of modern learning tools (computers, videos, Internet resources, etc.) into the English language learning process were drawn up;
- a project of an experimental training program in English for seafarers was prepared taking into account the latest rules and standards of the IMO.

A detailed analysis of the state of English language learning for future seafarers based on the conducted research is presented in the second volume of the MARCOM project report [4; 5] where the following were noted among the main shortcomings:

- 1) imperfection of the organizational and methodological support of the educational process, untimely updating of available educational materials, lack of innovative technologies, etc.;
- 2) isolation and disunity of teachers, and hence the inconsistency of teaching Maritime English to future seafarers in different countries of the world, which undoubtedly affects the quality of their interaction within the international team;
- 3) narrowly professional orientation of training and the absence of a socio-professional context, which is rightly considered to be the reason for the ineffective interaction of multinational crew members, especially in emergency situations.

**Conclusions.** It is obvious that language knowledge, abilities and skills outside of their contextual attachment to professional situations do not pass into the category of English-language communicative competence, as they often do not work in a stressful environment of industrial activity. According to scientists, the process of understanding operational English-language information and responding accordingly is characterized either as extremely difficult, or as something that does not happen at all [1]. The absence of contextual

information accumulated during the learning process about options for socio-professional interaction on board during communication in English does not allow to interpret the current situation and compare it with the existing and memorized learning experience regarding the possible decision. As a result, in the conditions of difficult communication, mutual understanding becomes more difficult, which causes conflicts, violations of the work order, unforeseen and emergency situations, etc. The noted shortcomings were explained by the experts as the stage of formation of the Maritime English educational discipline. However, their early awareness and timely elimination gave hope for the future prospects of the subject. Among the primary tasks of the methodology of teaching English to future seafarers, experts named the determination of the necessary and sufficient minimum regarding the subject side of the content, its formation in clear accordance with the requirements of the IMO, as well as providing practical assistance to teachers in the form of methodological guidance and technical support of the educational process.

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